

Meeting minutes

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| PROJECT | Town Deal | | |
| DATE | 24 July 2020 | LOCATION | Virtual meeting using Zoom |

| Attendees | |
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| Board Members | |
| Dr Nik Kotecha (Co-Chair) | Morningside Pharmaceuticals |
| Cllr Jonathan Morgan (Co-Chair) | Charnwood Borough Council |
| Cllr Jenny Bokor | Chair of MRG |
| Lez Cope Newman | Loughborough BID |
| Jane Hunt MP | MP for Loughborough |
| Jo Maher | Loughborough College |
| David Pagett-Wright | Chair of CECG |
| Cllr TJ Pendleton, CC | Leicestershire County Council |
| Richard Taylor | Loughborough University |
| Officer Attendees | |
| Rob Mitchell | Charnwood Borough Council |
| Eileen Mallon | Charnwood Borough Council |
| Richard Bennett | Charnwood Borough Council |
| Sylvia Wright | Charnwood Borough Council |
| Mike Roberts | Charnwood Borough Council |
| Chris Grace | Charnwood Borough Council |
| Helen Harris | Leicestershire County Council |
| David Marlow | Third Life Economics (Consultant) |
| Nicky Conway | Minute Taker (Charnwood Borough Council) |

| Apologies | |
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| | Leicestershire County Council |
| Professor Tracy Bhamra <i>(Richard Taylor acting as substitute)</i> | Loughborough University |
| Tom Purnell <i>(Helen Harris acting as substitute)</i> | Leicestershire County Council |
| Mandip Rai | LLEP |
| Andy Reed <i>(Dr Nik Kotecha acting as substitute)</i> | LLEP |
| Peter Sutton | BEIS/Communities |
| Martin Traynor | Economy & Skills Group |

| Meeting Type (Team, Board or other) |
|-------------------------------------|
| Board Meeting |

Meeting minutes

Meeting Minutes

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record and there were no matters arising not covered by future items on the agenda.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest. However, during item 7 (Upfront Projects Funding), Jo Maher declared a conflict of interest in this item.

Cllr Trevor Pendleton noted that his register of members Interest form required completing.

4. Project Overview Update

Chris Grace (TD Project Manager) presented this update. He drew the Board's attention to the key points in the report and stated the following:

- several project proposals from CECG, other stakeholders and the public had been received by the cut-off date of 10th July but some organisations had submitted proposals after this date. On 13th July a decision was made by the Co-chairs to submit the Town Investment Plan in the second cohort (by end of October 2020).
- The meeting with ARUP had been very encouraging about the approach being taken by Loughborough.
- a review of the Towns Fund guidance from the Government suggested that the approach being taken was consistent with the objectives of the Towns Fund. Town Deal locations were required to take into account the COVID impact on the local economy and to show evidence in the plan how projects would support economic recovery.

Board Members raised the following points:

- whether submission of the plan in cohort 2 would potentially require additional documentation as the town fund approach was further clarified by the Government – this was unlikely, the meeting with ARUP had made it very clear that there was no advantage to submitting in earlier cohorts, it was more critical to have a robust investment plan which would be considered on its own merit.
- that submitted plans in cohort 1 could be of an experimental nature and the numbers proposed for submission to that cohort were low. If the Loughborough investment plan was finalised before the end of October it could be submitted earlier.
- that the MRG had considered it advantageous to submit the plan in cohort 2. The plans submitted in cohort 1 could be available to the public for viewing and it was possible that they could inform the Loughborough plan going forward.
- that the Board wished to explore the opportunities offered by the Government indicating there was £50million available in the Towns Fund to bid for.

Recommendations Agreed:

1. That the Board considers the content of this report and agrees that early discussions are held with the Towns Hub support function in order to develop a plan of key

Meeting minutes

milestones for submitting the town investment plan before 31 October 2020.

2. That Endorsement is given to the decision to submit Loughborough's Town Investment Plan in Cohort 2 by 31st October 2020.

5. Public Consultation Activity and Outcomes

Mike Roberts (Communications Manager) presented this report. He drew the Board's attention to the key points in the report and highlighted the key outcomes from the MEL Research report attached at appendix 1. He noted that the findings as summarised would be used to formulate the Town Investment Plan.

David Marlow noted that he had attended all 6 Focus groups, the Virtual Chat session and 2 CECG meetings. He stated that two distinct views had been identified; those who wished to see the town return to its "sleepy market town" persona that they had grown up with, and others who saw Loughborough as a modern dynamic forward-thinking location. It was necessary to reconcile these perspectives to capture the intimacy and comfort of the historically provincial town with the dynamism of a forward-thinking centre that pushed boundaries.

The Chair of CECG updated the Board with key points from the last meeting of the Group. He stated that:

- CECG had raised concerns about the need to address COVID recovery issues but not to distract from the long-term regeneration plans for the town.
- it was important to understand how COVID had affected different business sectors but acknowledged this would difficult to predict at present.
- green technology projects would be a good return on investment and that the arts and heritage projects submitted were more robust.
- other funding sources should be considered for match funding, in particular, the Government's Arts, Culture and Heritage funding.
- there was a concern that the shortfall of number and value of projects submitted could reflect a need for assistance by organisations in finalising their project plans to meet the requirements of the Town Deal fund.

The Chair of MRG explained that the Group considered there were limited employment opportunities identified and run-down areas of the town had not been included in the proposals. It was important to achieve a balance between proposals for physical regeneration and for investment in people to ensure that social mobility issues and employment gaps were addressed. Eileen Mallon confirmed that the town deal funding was primarily designed for capital investment schemes with elements of revenue and although capital investment projects could be included, the added value, benefits of investment for individuals and improvement in areas would need to be demonstrated.

Board Members raised the following points:

- the report was very extensive and although some of the comments were negative, the majority of comments showed good support for the plan. The Board acknowledged the conflicting views highlighted by the consultation outcomes.

Meeting minutes

- that businesses in Loughborough were anxious about surviving after COVID. Reassurance was sought that long-term projects would be balanced alongside additional help with short term post COVID issues. The government guidance was clear that the plan had to demonstrate the impact of COVID and provision of support for economic recovery.
- that meetings between charities in the East of Loughborough and the College had been initiated. Feedback had suggested that a user-friendly location in the town centre for careers, employability and enterprise support would be beneficial. The College considered this to be critical to their role of supporting post COVID recovery and would be funding this project from its own revenue, potentially with some external capital funding support. It was noted that Loughborough Councillors would welcome the creation of a job advice and training Hub in the town centre.
- that there were employment and networking opportunities through the HS2 project.

Recommendations Agreed:

1. That the outcomes of the public consultation were welcomed as a useful part of the town deal process;
2. That Third Life Economics utilises the consultation outcomes in formulating the drafting of the Town Investment Plan.
3. That the draft consultation outcomes report produced by MEL Research is approved as the formal consultation report which will inform the Town Investment Plan.

6. Town Deal Investment Plan

Eileen Mallon introduced this report and stated that the Council had been working with David Marlow to refine the next stage. A review of the proposals received so far indicated there were some gaps, particularly from certain organisations and private sector investors. There was an opportunity to work with the County Council regarding cycle ways and green infrastructure projects.

The Board were updated with key themes from the recent meeting with ARUP as follows:

- that there was a real sense of enthusiasm about the Loughborough bid and that Loughborough had progressed significantly further than other town deal bids.
- the range and depth of the consultation process and the structure used for engaging with stakeholders was welcomed, in particular, the extensive engagement of the community with the process despite the difficulties presented by social distancing rules.
- that the projects would be subject to greater scrutiny if the Town Investment Plan wished to be ambitious and bid for the maximum of £50million.
- there was a need to ensure the Town Deal was part of a wider strategic solution and framework. As the Town Deal linked strongly with the Town Centre Master Plan, the Council's Local Plan and other partner strategies this indicated that the ambition of the Town Deal was robust.

David Marlow showed a presentation to highlight the salient points of the Town Investment Plan (TIP) process (attached to these minutes) and drew the Board's attention to the following:

Meeting minutes

- the unique selling point of Loughborough was active healthy living which resonated with the activities in the town.
- the town's assets and capabilities tended not to be in the town centre, it was a challenge of the plan to link the College, the University and Enterprise Zone with communities and the town.
- there was a need to improve the town centre and its distinctive character, noting that the town had national and regional significance and was the only Town Deal location with a top 10 university.
- although short of £25 million, the proposals received were from good applicants, with a strong foundation and breadth of project schemes represented.

Board Members raised the following points:

- that as the Government had recently announced extra funding for cycle routes, it would be advantageous to access this funding source. A project for cycle ways would need to be submitted by local towns or parishes to the County Council and it was critical to have the County Council's involvement.
- this presented a fantastic opportunity to develop a green agenda for the town. Suggestions included cycle paths along Alan Moss road to the train station, linking the university to the town and transport locations, creating a green bridge over Epinal way and using active landscaping to create a green corridor. A wildflower verges scheme was being initiated by the County Council. It was noted that two projects submitted by the Borough Council (the Lanes and Bedford Square project) included connectivity through the town for pedestrians and provided an opportunity to explore the town's cultural heritage.
- there were opportunities to encourage more private investment through the East Midlands Engine, Western Power and Regional Cycling groups. In addition, third party investment in the University Campus could be leveraged to support private investment in the town.
- the importance of the narrative and strategy in this bid to stand out from others - it was noted that the narrative for active living, green agenda and connectivity was compelling and that the town should bid for £50million. Recent data released relating to obesity suggested the relevance of a health agenda.
- there was a need to have clear terminology in the investment plan and to be sure of its meaning. Although it was acknowledged the audience for the plan would be Government officials, the plan should be understandable by everyone and it was recommended that an easy to read guide was created online.
- an explanation of what the Town Deal Observatory project involved was given. It was noted that although a small project it could be particularly relevant for other towns and work as a pilot.
- that the feedback regarding the town centre looking tired and unsafe would be taken on board in the assessment of the project proposals. It was noted that most short-term solutions were revenue based and there was a need for caution in encouraging more footfall in the present circumstances. However, the long-term plan, with support from businesses, was to create a vibrant night-time economy with a broad range of people in the town centre from early evening until late.
- that the discussions relating to green agenda, smart innovation and healthy living aligned with the LLEP strategy.

It was noted that a future meeting between the Borough Council, the County Council, the

Meeting minutes

College and the University would be necessary to consider projects such as cycling routes, linking the University, town centre and train station and the traffic flow issues on Epinal Way. It was agreed that the Board should look at the area around the Train station and how to link it easily with the Town centre.

Recommendations Agreed:

1. That the approach being taken to further develop the Town Investment Plan as described in this report and at Appendix 2 be approved;
2. That an evaluation of project proposals is carried out by Third Life Economics and sent to the Board for its comment, prior to a further draft of the Town Investment Plan being submitted to the next Board meeting on 25th September 2020;
3. That the Board comments and provides further shaping on the narrative they wish to see supporting the Town Deal and forming the contextual and strategic backdrop to specific project proposals;
4. That Lessons from Cohort One Town Deal proposals and subsequent advice from Government should be applied when developing the criteria which will be used to assess which projects should be included with the Town Investment Plan.

7. Upfront Projects Funding

Chris Grace and Eileen Mallon introduced this report and stated that, as a Town Deal location, 'upfront' grant funding had been allocated to Loughborough to help kick start economic recovery and get shovel ready projects underway. The allocation of £750K was based on the town's population size and the schemes had to be completed by March 2021.

The short timescale was challenging, and the Council was required to inform the Government if it wished to accept the money by 14th August. Projects identified had to demonstrate a link to the Town Investment Plan and be consistent with thematic priorities. Projects already submitted and others that the Council were aware of would be considered to see if they could be delivered within the timescale. An example of a scheme was a careers and enterprise hub which like all other projects would be appraised against its fit with the Town Deal priorities. It was noted that projects that added value in terms of jobs and careers to aid COVID recovery were likely to take precedence. Appraisal criteria would be designed to enable the Council to demonstrate why certain projects had been chosen. Any projects which pushed the capital above the £750K would be put forward as a TIP bid.

Consultation with Board Members regarding projects would occur via email and any comments they wished to make in this meeting. It was noted that final approval of how the grant would be spent was the Council's responsibility.

In response to a question by the Board, it was explained that ideas not yet converted into shovel ready projects would not be considered due to the requirement to fully deliver projects by 31st March 2021. However, organisations with ideas not fully realised were encouraged to submit a proposal to the TIP. It was vital that projects were delivered within the timescale and related to the categories stated in the letter from MHCLG or in the Towns Fund guidance

Meeting minutes

Intervention Framework.

Before the recommendation was agreed Jo Maher declared a conflict of interest and didn't vote as the College was involved in one of the project proposals.

Recommendation agreed: That the Board welcomed the availability of the grant and asks the Borough Council to consult closely with the Board in deciding which project or projects should potentially be eligible for the grant funding.

8. Projects Resources Update

David Marlow left the meeting at this point due to the discussion around the extension of the contract period for Third Life Economics.

Richard Bennett introduced this report and highlighted its key points. It was noted that the extension to the contract of Third Life Economics would be within the original £64,000 allocated, which had included a contingency element.

In response to a question by the Board, officers stated that there was no expectation that expenditure on capacity for delivering the town deal project would go beyond £162K and the project was still within the budget envelope. However, as no further capacity funding had been allocated by the Government beyond 31st March and it was likely that some projects might still be ongoing at this date, additional resource could be required going forward. The Chief Executive suggested that towards the year end it would be beneficial for the Board to review the situation.

Recommendations agreed:

1. That the commitments and expenditure against the budget are noted;
2. That an additional £8k of capacity funding, to extend the secondment of the current post holder in the role of Town Deal Project Manager from 31 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, be approved;
3. That the intention to extend the contract period for Third Life Economics beyond 31 July 2020 be noted.

9. Date of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for 25th September 2020.

10. AOB

It was noted that proposals for the Limehurst Depot linked with environmental agency projects and flood mitigation. It was part of the Council's project portfolio but as there were concerns about making the site viable for development due to flooding issues, it was unlikely to be a priority for the upfront projects funding.

Follow up actions

Meeting minutes

| Follow up actions | |
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| 1 | <u>ITEM 3 – Declarations of Interest</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerk to forward copy of Register of Members’ Interests form to Cllr Pendleton for completion. |
| 2 | <u>ITEM 6 – Town Investment Plan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future meeting to be arranged between the Borough Council, the County Council, the College and the University to consider highways, cycling and green corridor projects, (Cllr Pendleton to liaise). • Rob Mitchell to discuss the Council’s licensing strategy with regard to how best to encourage the Town Centre’s night-time economy with Cllr Bokor. • Officers in consultation with the Board to explore linkage between the Train Station and the Town Centre with the County Council. |
| 3 | <u>ITEM 7- Upfront Projects Funding</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Hunt MP to encourage organisations in contact with her with ideas to submit a bid to the Town Deal. |